

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9364

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13023

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GIANNI AGNELLI

1. AT MY REQUEST I MET WITH GIANNI AGNELLI AUGUST 9 HERE AT THE EMBASSY FOR A GENERAL CONVERSATION ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ITALY.

2. ON POLITICAL SITUATION, AGNELLI TENDED TO DISCOUNT THE SPECULATION THAT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WAS DESTINED TO BE SHORT-LIVED. AGNELLI THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS THE REAL POSSIBILITY THAT THE LIFE OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT COULD RUN FOR TWO YEARS. HE FELT THAT THE PCI HAS TOO MUCH INVESTED IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. BASED ON HIS CONVERSATION WITH PCI LEADERS, AGNELLI THOUGHT THE PCI WOULD SEEK TO CONSOLIDATE ITS POSITION RATHER THAN TO HURRY THE GOVERNMENT'S DOWNFALL. WHEN I RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PSI'S RE-ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT NOW THAT CRAXI HAS ASSUMED THE SECRETARYSHIP, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE IN BOTH THE DC AND PCI'S MUTUAL INTEREST TO LET THE PSI REALLY "COOL THEIR HEELS" OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. AGNELLI, ALTHOUGH EXPRESSING ADMIRATION FOR ANDREOTTI'S INTELLIGENCE AND ABILITY, WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ANDREOTTI'S COMMITMENT TO MEANINGFUL REFORM AND REJUVENATION OF THE DC. HE MENTIONED THE APPOINTMENT OF MANY OF ANDREOTTI'S INNER CIRCLE TO UNDERSECRETARY POSITIONS AS AN ILLUSTRATION THAT ANDREOTTI MIGHT NOT FULLY REALIZED THE PUBLIC'S MESSAGE TO THE DC FOR REAL REFORM AND REJUVENATION.

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AGNELLI DID SIGNAL OUT INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA AS A BRIGHT

RISING STAR IN THE DC AND WHO COULD PROVIDE THE DC WITH A NEW VIGOROUS, POPULAR PUBLIC IMAGE.

3. I ASKED AGNELLI ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SMALLER LAY PARTIES COMBINING TO FORM A NEW DEMOCRATIC LAY PARTY. HE THOUGHT THIS WAS A POSSIBILITY IN THE DISTANT FUTURE BUT TOTALLY DISCOUNTED IT IN THE NEAR TERM SO LONG AS LA MALFA AND SARAGAT ARE ON THE SCENE. HE INDICATED THAT LA MALFA IN PARTICULAR IS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO THE FORMATION OF SUCH A PARTY AND AGNELLI DID NOT THINK HIS RESISTANCE COULD BE OVERCOME AND HE PERSONALLY WOULD NOT BE LEADING ANY ATTEMPT TO OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES TO FORM SUCH A PARTY.

4. I INDICATED TO AGNELLI THAT I WAS PLEASED THAT A MAN OF THE STATURE OF GUIDO CARLI HAS ACCEPTED THE PRESIDENCY OF CONFINDUSTRIA. AGNELLI WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CARLI TAKING ON THIS NEW ASSIGNMENT AND SAID HE PERSONALLY TALKED CARLI INTO IT. HE FELT THAT EVEN THOUGH CARLI DOES NOT HAVE AN INDUSTRIAL BACKGROUND HE HAS THE STATURE AND INTERNATIONAL STANDING WHICH WILL ENHANCE THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY IN ITALY. WHEN I RAISED THE QUESTION ABOUT CARLI'S POLITICAL VIEWS REGARDING THE PCI, AGNELLI INDICATED THAT CARLI DOES SHARE THE VIEWS OF MANY IN ITALY WHO FEEL THAT THE COMMUNISTS MUST INCREASINGLY BE BROUGHT INTO THE AREA OF DECISION MAKING ON ECONOMIC/SOCIAL POLICY AND MUST BE MADE TO BEAR SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISIONS IN THESE AREAS. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT THINK THAT CARLI'S POLITICAL POSITION WOULD BE SEEN TO BE IN FAVOR OF EARLY PCI ENTRY INTO ITALY'S GOVERNMENT.

5. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE WITH AGNELLI HIS RECENT INTERVIEW WITH PETER NICHOLS IN WHICH HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT DURING THE CAMPAIGN THE FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS OF THE PCI AND THE DC WERE THE SAME, -BOTH PRO-WESTERN AND PRO-NATO. I QUESTIONED THE ACCURACY OF THAT STATEMENT. AGNELLI SAID THAT THE ONLY POINT HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE WAS THAT FOR CAMPAIGN PURPOSES BOTH THE DC AND THE PCI WERE TAKING SIMILAR FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS. HE CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT IN HIS OWN MIND THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PCI CAMPAIGN PLEDGES AND WHAT THEIR ACTUAL PERFORMANCE WOULD BE. I INDICATED THAT IT WAS REGRETABLE THAT AGNELLI COULD NOT HAVE MADE THAT POINT MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPLICIT IN HIS INTERVIEW WHICH WAS BEING READ BY MANY AS IMPLYING HIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE PCI'S FOREIGN POLICY INTENTIONS. AGNELLI INDICATED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE AND HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE EXPLICIT IN HIS REMARKS. VOLPE

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